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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE
CROP REPORTING BOARD
WASHINGTON, D. C.

March 31, 1955

X
FREEZE DAMAGE TO FRUITS AND VEGETABLES,
March 26-27, 1955 X

Record breaking low temperatures in the South Central and Southeastern States on March 26 and 27 caused extensive damage to early season fruits and vegetables. Below freezing temperatures occurred as far south as Central Texas and Northern Florida. In general, temperatures at or near coastal points dropped to the high 20's and interior temperatures ranged from around 15 to 25 degrees. Extremely low temperatures on these dates were preceded and followed by lighter freezes in scattered localities which contributed to crop damage. This period of cold weather occurred at a time when many crops, susceptible to freezing injury, were at a stage of development which resulted in extensive losses from these low temperatures.

PEACHES: The peach crop will be almost a complete failure in the 10 Early Southern States of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas and Oklahoma. Some orchards in protected spots will probably produce a few peaches for local consumption. Peach trees were probably damaged in many areas but the extent cannot be determined for several months. In Virginia, practically all peach buds were killed in all areas except the important northern Shenandoah Valley where a fair crop is still in prospect. No serious damage is reported from peach areas in West Virginia, Maryland and southern Pennsylvania where development was less advanced. In Southern Illinois, low temperatures on the morning of March 22 cut peach prospects sharply and practically all remaining buds were killed by temperatures as low as 5° on March 26. Peach buds in Tennessee, Kentucky, Southern Missouri and Southern Indiana were nearly all killed by the recent low temperatures. Except for supplies from California, there will be very few peaches for fresh market until after mid-August.

APPLES: In Virginia, most of the apple buds were killed in southern and southwestern areas of the State with severe damage in the central areas. Losses are particularly heavy for Delicious, Stayman and Albemarle Pippin varieties. Winesap and York Imperial have better prospects than other varieties. The important apple area in the northern Shenandoah Valley apparently escaped serious damage although buds may have been weakened. Apple buds were nearly all killed in most areas of North Carolina. Apples were severely damaged in Southern Illinois from the Carbondale area southward. The important Calhoun County area on the Mississippi River escaped serious damage. Arkansas apples were practically all killed.

Pecans sustained some freeze damage in many areas but the extent of the loss cannot be determined at this time. The tung nut crop will be extremely short this year because of severe damage to bloom and set. Arkansas grapes will probably be less than a fourth of a crop.

STRAWBERRIES: In Louisiana, from 25 to 50 percent of the bloom and fruit was lost and production is expected to be very light during the next two to three weeks. Additional moisture is needed to insure recovery of damaged plants. In Arkansas, practically all of the blooms and most of the small berries were

killed. Most plants in that State have good vitality and are expected to recover. Harvest will be delayed from one to two weeks. In Tennessee and Alabama, about 30 to 35 percent of the bloom was lost. Shipments from Tennessee are not expected to start until about the first week of May. In Alabama, harvest will be delayed from two to three weeks. In North Carolina, harvest had been expected to start in about two weeks but with the destruction of bloom and young fruit this will be delayed until about the first of May. Only a few strawberry plants had bloomed on the Eastern Shore of Virginia but this early bloom was killed.

POTATOES: The Texas early spring potato crop in Lower Valley has been delayed by cold. Most late spring potatoes in Central and Northeast Texas were frozen to the ground and harvest will be delayed two to three weeks. None of the summer acreage in the Hereford and Muleshoe areas of Western Texas was up and seed pieces appear to have escaped damage. Early potatoes in the New Roads and Thibodaux sections of Louisiana were frosted but most vines are still standing. The crop there has been delayed and reduced yields are a possibility. Additional moisture is needed to insure satisfactory recovery of potatoes in those areas. Early potatoes in Mississippi were frozen back and this is expected to result in about a 10-day delay in the start of harvest. In Arkansas, only a limited acreage of potatoes in the southern part of the State was above ground. Vines in these fields were frozen but they will regrow. In Alabama, approximately 65 percent of the vines were killed, the percentage of loss varying with moisture conditions. In Baldwin County it was very dry which contributed to the loss of vines. Plant losses in individual fields ranged from 35 to 100 percent. While harvest is expected to be delayed two to three weeks, most fields are expected to recover. The effect of the freeze on ultimate yields is uncertain at this time. Potato vines in Georgia's early producing sections were killed by the freeze. Florida's important Hastings and LaCrosse sections escaped without loss to potatoes but growth was slowed by cold weather. The small acreage in Escambia County (Western Florida) was severely damaged. In South Carolina, potato vines in all fields were cut back to the ground or badly singed by below freezing temperatures. Plants are beginning to put on new growth and are expected to recover. Harvest will be delayed but the effect of the freeze on yields cannot be determined at this early date. About 40 percent of the early potato acreage in North Carolina was above ground at the time of the freeze and these vines were killed to about one inch below the surface. Date of harvest is expected to be delayed by some 10 days to two weeks. Damage to Virginia summer potato crop was negligible as few fields had emerged before the time of the freeze.

WATERMELONS: The early acreage of watermelons in the Lower Valley and Falfurrias areas of South Texas was not damaged by cold but did suffer some damage from high winds during the past week. Considerable acreage in South Texas areas and in Central Texas was lost but it is not too late to replant this acreage. However, it is very dry in this area and this may curtail reseeding. Very little watermelon acreage had been planted in northern Texas before the freeze occurred. In Louisiana, very few watermelons were up and recent low temperatures are expected to have little effect on that crop in this State. All the early acreage that was above ground in Alabama was killed and replanting will be necessary. Start of harvest will be delayed by 2 to 3 weeks. Very few watermelons had been planted in Mississippi and Arkansas prior to the freeze and losses in these States were negligible. All the early watermelons in Georgia were killed by the freeze and the harvest season there will be delayed from 2 to 3 weeks. A shortage of seed may limit the replanting of acreage in that State. In South Carolina, watermelons were planted later than usual and very few fields were up at the time of the freeze. The limited acreage killed will be replanted but growers may find it necessary to switch varieties because of the shortage of seed. Watermelon fields

in North Florida that were up were damaged and most of the early acreage north of Gainesville was expected to be replanted. Because the planting of watermelons in North Carolina and Virginia occurs later than in other States, no acreage was lost there.

TOMATOES: In South Texas, low temperatures delayed maturity of the early-spring tomato crop and high winds whipped the vines and scarred the fruit. Loss of tomatoes was heavy in Eastern and Northeast Texas where the late-spring crop is grown. Most tomatoes at Yokum and nearby sections were lost and it is so late that much of this acreage will not be reset. In the Jacksonville area, the limited acreage which had been set was killed and there was considerable damage to plants in cold frames. Replanting of lost acreage will depend upon the availability of plants. At Avery, most plants in cold frames were killed and plant losses in hotbeds were also extensive. Early fields of tomatoes in Louisiana were damaged and harvest will be delayed. Some resetting will be necessary. In Arkansas, no tomatoes had been transplanted to the fields. Considerable numbers of plants in cold frames were killed but many of these will be replanted. The acreage probably will not be reduced. The beginning of harvest may be delayed a few days but peak harvest in Arkansas probably will not be affected to any extent. In Mississippi, early plantings were killed and a plant shortage will probably hold the acreage below that intended. In Alabama, most of the acreage is expected to be replanted but harvest will be delayed from two to three weeks. In Tennessee, approximately 75 percent of the plants were lost. Resetting in cold frames is being done with shipped-in plants. Harvest is expected to be delayed from one to two weeks depending upon the availability of plants. In Georgia, as in Alabama, all fields of tomatoes that had been set before the freeze were a total loss. Although this acreage is expected to be replanted, harvest will be delayed two to three weeks. Blowing sand and freezing weather damaged early tomatoes extensively in South Carolina. The damage was most severe in transplanted fields. Some of the seeded acreage is expected to be saved. Seedbeds escaped damage and planting and replanting will continue. However, if all acreage is planted or replanted, it will be necessary to secure plants from other areas.

SNAP BEANS: Spring snap beans in Louisiana were a complete loss. About two-thirds of the acreage will be reseeded and harvest is expected to be delayed by about three weeks. In Southern Arkansas, only a limited acreage of snap beans which was above ground was killed during the freeze. Early fields in Mississippi were killed but these can be replanted and no appreciable delay in harvest is expected. There was a 100 percent loss in acreage in Alabama, most of which is expected to be replanted. Harvest there is expected to be delayed by two or three weeks. All snap beans in Georgia were killed and scarcity of seed may limit the acreage to be replanted. Damage to snap beans in Florida was limited to the northern producing areas where acreage in the colder locations was killed. This acreage is being reseeded. Beans that escaped damage were retarded by low temperatures. Fields around Charleston and Beaufort in South Carolina were thinned and damaged but most of this acreage can be saved although yields will be sharply reduced. In the Holly Hill area, complete plant losses make it necessary to reseed that acreage. Only a limited acreage of snap beans in North Carolina was above ground. This acreage is being replanted. In Virginia, planting of snap beans had not begun at the time of the freeze.

CABBAGE: Cabbage in Mississippi suffered heavy damage, but the full extent of the crop loss is uncertain at this time. Estimates indicate that as much as 50 percent of the prospective tonnage may have been lost. Cabbage producing areas need rain now and losses will be affected by future moisture conditions. The harvest season there has been delayed as the result of freeze damage. Losses to early

planted fields in Tennessee were heavy and growers are now resetting damaged fields with plants shipped in from other States. If planting can proceed without interruption, harvest will probably be delayed from one to two weeks. In South Carolina, the damage to cabbage was confined to wrapper leaves which has necessitated heavy trimming on early fields now being cut. Sizes, consequently, are small and small loss in tonnage is indicated. The extent of freeze damage to cabbage in the Norfolk area of Virginia and the Elizabeth City area of North Carolina is uncertain. This crop is still immature and may recover without serious loss but growers expect that more than the usual number of seeders will develop.

CANTALOUPS: While a few cantaloups were lost in the Winter Garden Area of Texas no damage to this crop occurred in other south Texas producing sections. Strong winds whipped vines in these areas, however, and damage from this source is expected to delay maturity of the crop. There was a heavy loss of cantaloup acreage in central Texas but replanting is still possible in this area. No significant acreage of cantaloups was up in other southern States at the time of the freeze and, as a result, this crop escaped serious damage.

ONIONS: There was no significant loss in onions as a result of the cold and no serious delay in the maturity of the advanced irrigated fields of southern Texas is expected. The development of late irrigated onions has been slowed. Yield prospects on non-irrigated onions at Raymondville and Coastal Bend were reduced by cold weather and drying winds. In the Dallas section, the late spring onion crop appears to have escaped any direct damage but it has been set back an estimated two weeks. Moisture conditions in this area are favorable for recovery of these onions. No damage occurred to onions in the Texas Panhandle.

CUCUMBERS: Louisiana cucumbers suffered heavy damage and start of harvest there is expected to be delayed about two weeks. Low temperatures in North Florida killed cucumbers that had emerged in all except the warmer locations and replanting of this acreage is now under way. Growth of cucumbers in Northern Florida that escaped freezing injury has been retarded. In South Carolina, only a limited acreage of cucumbers was up and this was killed, making replanting necessary.

OTHER VEGETABLES: Early sweet corn in the lower valley of Texas was retarded by recent cold weather but no acreage was lost there. Loss of acreage in the later areas of central Texas was heavy and much of this acreage cannot safely be replanted this late in the year.

Damage to peppers was heavy in Louisiana and since pepper plants are currently scarce, replanting of all of the acreage lost may not be possible.

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April 1, 1955

FREEZE DAMAGE TO FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

(Supplement to Report Issued March 31, 1955)

The statement relative to the damage to early potatoes in Alabama contained in the report pertaining to freeze damage in the Southeast and South Central States issued March 31, 1955 should have been as follows:

"In Alabama, approximately 95 percent of the potato vines were killed by freezing temperatures and loss in prospective production is expected to be about 65 percent. Reported losses ranged from 35 to 100 percent with the percentage varying with moisture conditions and age of plants. In Baldwin County it is very dry and additional moisture is needed to enable surviving plants to regrow. Harvest is expected to be delayed two to three weeks."



